

Chicagoland Grows,® Inc.

Plant Release Bulletin #42

Chicagoland Grows®, Inc., presents the Prairieblues™ series of false indigo (*Baptisia*) hybrids

Building on the success of the four previous Prairieblues™ false indigo introductions developed at the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Chicagoland Grows® plant introduction program is pleased to announce that eight more hybrids are now in nursery production trials. They feature exciting new flower colors, varied habits and sizes, clean foliage, and the adaptability and durability expected of superior false indigo hybrids. Watch for their availability!

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***Baptisia australis* 'Blue Mound' PPAF**

The inch-wide dusty violet-blue flowers of this selection are borne above attractive blue-green foliage from mid-May into early June (USDA Zone 5). 'Blue Mound' develops into and maintains a perfectly uniform mound all summer, which you will think was sheared! It is equally tolerant of acidic and alkaline soils. Developed by crossing the larger, cold-hardy *Baptisia australis* var. *australis* with the compact and heat tolerant *B. australis* var. *minor*, this vigorous selection is intermediate in size to both parents, but has the heavier blooming of the larger parent and the more uniform, broad-rounded habit and finer foliage of the smaller parent. 'Blue Mound' offers the best of both parents!

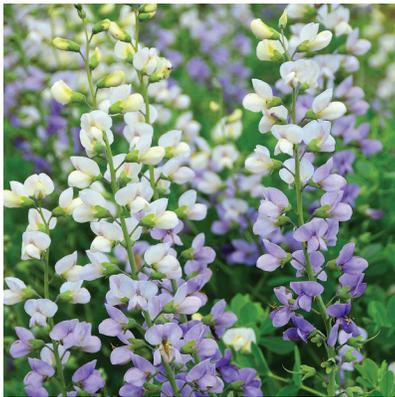
Height: 3' Spread: 4'



***Baptisia* 'Lavender Rose' PPAF**

Selected partly for its distinct vase-shaped habit in bloom and its fantastic flower production, but most notably for its unique bloom color, this plant's flowers start off medium rose-violet, then age to soft lavender-rose, as unique as its namesake the lavender rose. The inch-wide flowers are densely produced on 18"-long inflorescences. Expect three weeks of bloom from mid-May into early June (USDA Zone 5). After blooming, this vigorous and adaptable selection matures into a dense, broad mound with clean foliage. 'Lavender Rose' is an advanced-generation hybrid developed from *Baptisia australis* and *B. bracteata*.

Height: 3½' Spread: 5'



***Baptisia* 'Lunar Eclipse' PPAF**

The inch-wide flowers of this selection are initially a light lemon-cream in color, aging to a medium and even dark violet, producing a unique two-toned color effect to the inflorescences like no other false indigo! The 15"-long inflorescences are held well above the foliage. Expect a three-week bloom from late May to mid-June (USDA Zone 5). Mature plants exhibit an open, airy habit with stout stems angled out at their base and no lower stem foliage. 'Lunar Eclipse' is a wonderful focal plant for any perennial border. Well-drained soils are a must. This complex hybrid was developed from *Baptisia albescens*, *B. australis*, *B. leucophaea*, and *B. tinctoria*.

Height: 3' Spread: 3½'



***Baptisia* 'Mojito' PPAF**

Selected especially for its heavy flower production, the light lemon-green flowers contrast nicely with the deep lime-green foliage. 'Mojito' begins flowering in early to mid-May, somewhat ahead of most other false indigos (USDA Zone 5). It also blooms longer than most false indigos—upward of four weeks. The vase-shaped habit in spring gives way to a more rounded habit during the remainder of the growing season. 'Mojito' has strong stems that don't lodge, and its attractive foliage is darker in color than most other false indigos. This complex hybrid was developed from *Baptisia australis*, *B. bracteata*, and *B. sphaerocarpa*.

Height: 3½' Spread: 5'



***Baptisia* 'Royal Purple' PP25,508**

This hybrid false indigo with its strong *Baptisia australis* influence was selected for its incredibly saturated, dark violet-purple flowers on a plant that otherwise resembles *B. australis* in vigor, size, and habit. Plants bloom for three weeks commencing in mid-May (USDA Zone 5). The inch-wide flowers are produced on 18"-long inflorescences, which may be partially hidden in the foliage in warmer zones. Plants are cloaked with attractive blue-green foliage all summer. 'Royal Purple' may lodge in shade or on overly fertile soils, and is for full sun only. This complex hybrid was developed mainly from *B. australis*, and secondarily from *B. bracteata* and *B. sphaerocarpa*.

Height: 4' Spread: 5½'



***Baptisia* 'Sandstorm' PPAF**

Not only is this one of the most floriferous hybrids we have developed, it also pushes the boundary for color with its distinctly bicolored, light sandy-yellow flowers with violet markings that fade as the flowers age. From a distance, the flowers appear tan in color. The inch-wide blossoms are held well above the foliage on inflorescences as long as 24". Plants bloom for three weeks commencing in mid-May (USDA Zone 5). Distinctly vase-shaped in bloom, the foliage continues to expand until the plants are broad-rounded mounds, densely foliated to the ground. 'Sandstorm' is a second-generation *B. australis* × *B. bracteata* hybrid.

Height: 4' Spread: 5½'



***Baptisia* 'Spilled Buttermilk' PPAF**

Baptisia bracteata is unique for its early bloom and horizontal inflorescences, but it can be more difficult to cultivate than some false indigos. 'Spilled Buttermilk' was developed to give the same appearance but with more vigor and ease of propagation. Its light lemon-yellow flowers are produced for three weeks on horizontally borne inflorescences commencing in early May (USDA Zone 5). Plants are more compact and produce fewer stems than most other false indigos. Like *B. bracteata*, this selection may go dormant by August, so plant 'Spilled Buttermilk' where its disappearance in the garden can be masked. Best grown in well-drained soils. A *B. australis* × *B. bracteata* hybrid backcrossed to *B. bracteata*.

Height: 23" Spread: 3'



***Baptisia* 'Sunny Morning' PP25,479**

This stunning false indigo was selected for its amazing profusion of vibrant lemon-yellow flowers borne on charcoal-gray-tinted stems, all dramatically displayed above the medium to dark green foliage. Plants bloom for three weeks, beginning in early May (USDA Zone 5)—a good ten days ahead of *Baptisia sphaerocarpa*. 'Sunny Morning' is a vigorous plant with many stems, and its dense, uniformly broad-rounded habit is maintained all growing season. Best adapted to acidic to neutral soils, as the foliage may become chlorotic on high pH soils, this selection otherwise is vigorous and adaptable. It is a primary hybrid of *B. sphaerocarpa* and *B. albescens*.

Height: 3¼' Spread: 5'

Origin

All of these selections of the Prairieblues™ false indigos were developed by Jim Ault, Ph.D., at the Chicago Botanic Garden from crosses made between 1999 and 2004. The selections were developed from crossing *Baptisia albescens* (formerly *B. alba*), *B. australis* var. *australis*, *B. australis* var. *minor*, *B. bracteata* (formerly *B. leucophaea*), *B. sphaerocarpa*, and *B. tinctoria* in various combinations. All parent plants and selections were grown in-ground at the Chicago Botanic Garden (USDA Zone 5b) during the breeding and selection process.

Previous Introductions

Baptisia × *varicolor* ‘Twilite’, *Baptisia* × *bicolor* ‘Starlite’, *Baptisia* ‘Solar Flare’, and *Baptisia* ‘Midnight’

Hardiness

All of these selections are cold-hardy to USDA Hardiness Zones 4 to 7 and heat-tolerant to AHS Zones 4 to 7 (some to 8). However, rampant foliage growth may mask the floral display in AHS Zones 7 and 8 for some selections.

Bloom Season

Most of the false indigos bloom for three weeks or less, but careful selection from the species and hybrids can provide for blooms over a six- to eight-week period in the garden. Their bloom period in northern Illinois (USDA Zone 5b) is typically mid-May to early July.

Plant Habits

The habits of false indigos can vary from upright to vase-shaped to broadly rounded, depending on their parentage. The number of stems produced and the presence or absence of foliage lower down on the main stems are both also strongly influenced by their parentage. Selections and hybrids from *Baptisia australis* and *B. sphaerocarpa* tend to be larger and more vigorous, and have more stems.

Growth Rates and Sizes

Young false indigo plants take a year or two establishing large root systems, and then dramatically increase their stem and bloom production in successive years. Under good conditions, the selections will increase in size annually until maturity, typically in four to six years. Ultimate size depends on the parentage of the hybrids, with the individual selections ranging from 1 to 5 feet in height and 2 to 9 feet in diameter.

Ornamental Characteristics and Landscape Value

The false indigos provide a riot of color—white, yellow, blue, violet, purple, and even the odd orange, tan, and brown—from their copious floral displays produced in late spring to early summer. Their clean summer foliage and varied habits add valuable texture and serve as excellent foliar backdrops for other plants in the perennial or mixed border. The stems and fruit on most selections will turn dark brown to black after the first hard freeze in autumn, providing winter interest. The more upright selections make excellent specimen plants intermixed with other perennials, while the larger, more rounded selections can be massed at the back of the border.

Culture

All of the false indigos prefer full sun and a reasonably moist, well-drained soil. Most are fairly drought-tolerant once established. False indigos in general are indifferent to soil type and pH, with the exception of *Baptisia albescens* (formerly *B. alba*) and related hybrids preferring neutral to acidic soils, and *B. tinctoria* and related hybrids preferring sandy or other sharply drained soils. *B. australis*, *B. sphaerocarpa*, and their related hybrids are quite adaptable to clay soils. False indigos develop extensive root systems, and are very difficult to transplant once established. Understand the ultimate size and habit of any false indigo selection and space them accordingly when planting. Most are adaptable to lean soils and do not need extensive fertilizer or mulch applications.

Pest and Disease Problems

False indigos exhibit good to excellent disease resistance. A seed weevil will predate the seed, but this does not detract from either plant health or display value. The genista broom moth caterpillar (*Uresiphita reversalis*) can seriously defoliate plants of *Baptisia*, but this tends to be more of a problem in USDA Zones 6 and 7 and in warmer climates. The caterpillar has been a problem only twice in 15 years in northern Illinois.

Propagation

False indigos may be readily propagated from still-pliable shoot tip cuttings taken about mid-June in northern Illinois. Use 1,250 ppm KIBA for a standard 5-second dip. Stick the cuttings with at least one, and possibly two, unbranched nodes inserted into the rooting medium. One of these dormant axillary buds will become the overwintering bud in the pot the first winter. Use a deeper pot for rooting, such as an SVD-2, -3, or -4 pot, to ensure the bottom of the cutting has soil below it. Several growers use SVD-3 or SVD-4 pots or their equivalent and stick two cuttings to a pot to ensure they have a fuller looking plant the following year. A small percentage of the plants will bloom the following year after rooting, and all of them should bloom the second year. The earlier the cuttings can be rooted in the propagation year, the greater the overwinter survival and shoot growth the subsequent year.

Chicagoland Grows® is a nonprofit corporation of the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Morton Arboretum, and the Ornamental Growers Association of Northern Illinois (OGA).

The Chicagoland Grows® Plant Introduction Program is dedicated to the evaluation, selection, production, and marketing of recommended and new plant cultivars. Plants selected for the program have proven to be adaptable to the Midwest and are made available to the commercial and retail landscape industry through an international network of growers and propagators.

For more information about Chicagoland Grows®, contact the Plant Introduction Department, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022, (847) 835-8301, or visit chicagolandgrows.org.

Cover photo: *Baptisia* ‘Sunny Morning’